



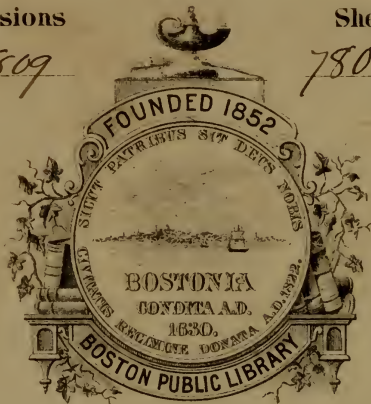
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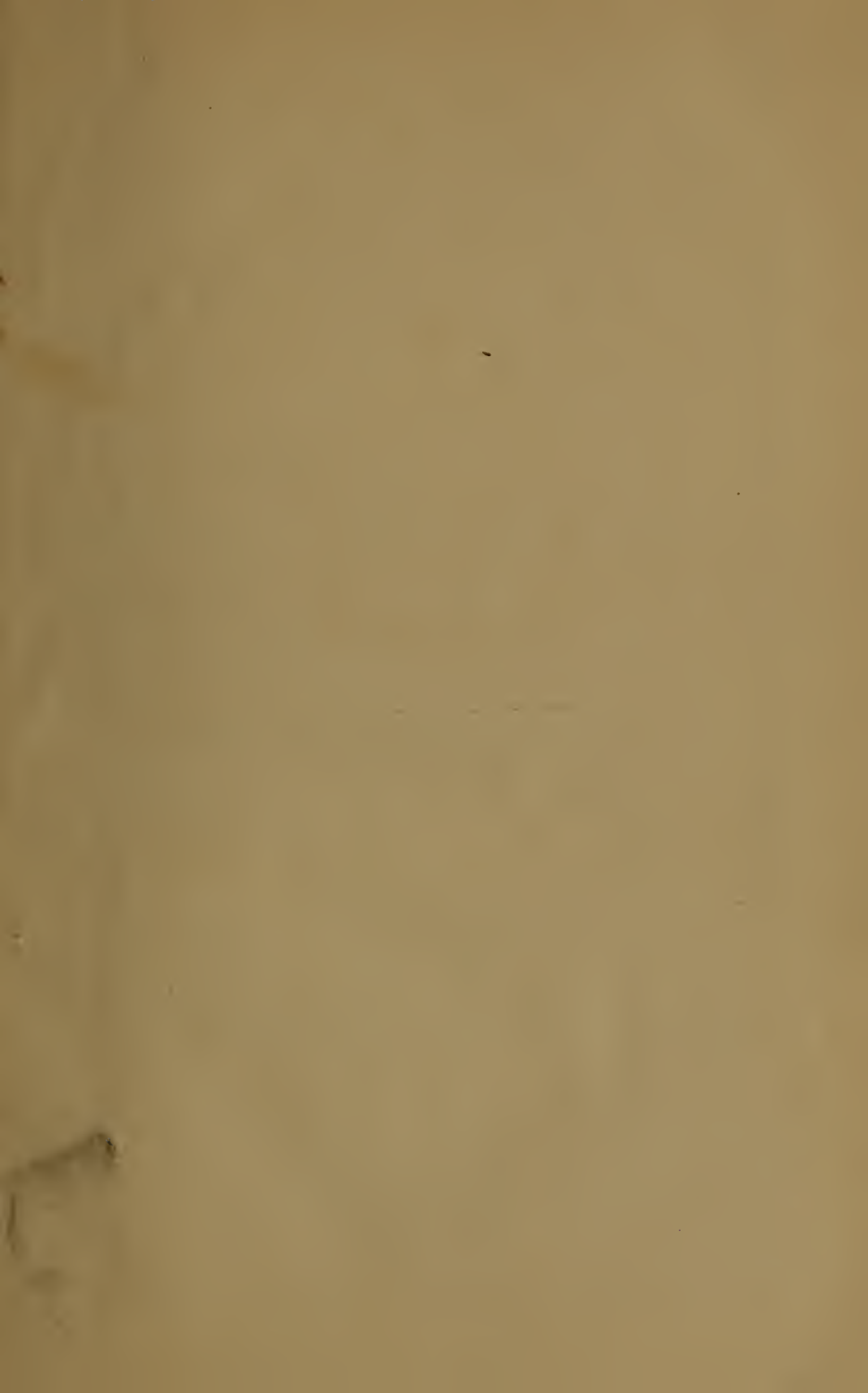
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SOME EXPERIMENTS AND INFERENCES

IN REGARD TO

BINOCULAR VISION.

—ALSO—

ON OUR INABILITY FROM THE RETINAL IMPRESSION

ALONE TO DETERMINE WHICH

RETINA IS IMPRESSED.

BY

PROF. WILLIAM B. ROGERS.

NEW HAVEN:

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## SOME EXPERIMENTS AND INFERENCES

IN REGARD TO

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# BINOCULAR VISION.

BY PROF. WILLIAM B. ROGERS.

IN the theory of binocular vision which has been so ably expounded by Sir David Brewster, Brücke, and others, it is contended that no part of an object is seen single and distinctly, but that to which the optic axes are for the moment directed, and that "the unity of the perception is obtained by the rapid survey which the eyes take of every part of the object." According to this view our perception of an object in its solidity and relief, instead of being the simple and direct result of the pictures formed at any one moment in the two eyes, is acquired by a cumulative process, in which the optic axes are successively converged upon every point of the object within view.

In an experimental discussion of some points in binocular vision published in the Am. Journ. of Science several years ago,\* I was led to conclude that the phenomena of the stereoscopic resultant do not necessarily or even usually conform to these conditions, and that "the perception of a perspective resultant line or of a physical line in the same attitude does not require the successive convergence of the axes to *every point*." The grounds of this conclusion were,—first that the perspectiveness of the resultant although not perceived when the axes are steadily maintained at any one convergence, appears as soon as they are allowed sufficient freedom of motion to *unite a few contiguous points* of the component lines, and that it then effects the whole extent of the resultant; and—second that the resultant presents a perspective attitude even when the component lines, instead of being united into one, are brought together so as to intersect at a small angle, *each of the intersecting lines in this case appearing in relief*.

\* This Journal, [2], xx, 86, 204, 218, and xxi, 80, 173, 439.



Satisfied from these considerations that the perceived singleness and relief of the resultant are to be ascribed rather to a *process of suggestion* than to the exhaustive binocular survey which has been supposed necessary, I was led to the opinion that, while some change of direction and convergence of the axes is needed for the effect, the successive view of a few contiguous points is all that is required to bring the suggestive action into play and to give rise to the full perception of the position and relief of the resultant.

In this view while rejecting the theory of successive vision in the form in which it has been propounded, I still considered some degree of motion of the axes as one of the steps by which we obtain the perception of the binocular resultant.

The following experiments, intended still further to test the theory of the successive combination of corresponding points in binocular vision, are believed to be in part new, and are in part modified repetitions of experiments already described by Profs. Wheatstone and Dove. They offer what seems to be decisive proof that such a successive combination of pictures point by point, however it may enter in many cases into the complex process of vision, *cannot be regarded as an essential condition to the singleness and perspectiveness of the binocular perception.*

1. Let a brilliant line, held in a perspective position at a convenient distance midway between the eyes, be regarded intently for a few seconds so as to produce a lasting impression on the retinae. On turning the eyes towards a blank wall or screen the subjective impression will be seen projected against it and having the same perspective attitude as the original line. If then one eye be closed the line will appear to subside into the surface of the screen taking an inclined position corresponding to the optical projection of the original line as seen by the unclosed eye and therefore corresponding to the image formed in that eye. By opening and closing the eyes alternately, and finally directing both to the screen, we are able to see the two oblique lines corresponding to these projections and their binocular resultant corresponding to the original object.

2. Let two slightly inclined luminous lines formed by narrow slits in a strip of black card-board be combined into a perspective resultant either with or without a stereoscope. Looking at this for a few seconds so as to induce the reverse ocular spectrum, and then directing the eyes towards the opposite wall of the apartment, *a single spectrum will be observed having the attitude and relief of the original binocular resultant.*

As a strong illumination of the lines is necessary to bring out the most striking effect, the card-board should be held between the eyes and some brilliantly white surface, as the globe of a solar lamp or a strongly illuminated cloud, care being taken to prevent the entrance of extraneous light.



3. Using the same arrangement, let the luminous lines be regarded in succession each by the corresponding eye, the other eye being shaded so that no direct binocular combination can be formed. On looking toward the wall it will be seen that *the two subjective images unite to form a single spectral line having the same relief as if the lines had been directly combined with or without the stereoscope.*

While the perspective image continues distinctly visible, let either eye be closed the other being still directed towards the wall. The image will instantly lose its relief and take its position on the plane of the wall as an inclined line corresponding to the subjective image in the eye which has remained open. When the subjective impressions have been sufficiently strong, it is easy to alternate these effects by projecting first the picture proper to the right eye and then that of the left on the plane of the wall, with their respective contrary inclinations. On then looking with both eyes we see the resultant image instantly start forth in its perspective attitude.

It is hardly necessary to say that in order to obtain these effects satisfactorily even with lines very strongly illuminated, the observer should have some practice in experiments on subjective vision. *In these circumstances, however, I have found the results to be perfectly certain and uniform.*

The conditions of the experiments are obviously such as to exclude all opportunity of *a shifting of the image on the retina.* Such a shifting however is essential to that successive combination of pairs of points in the two images which on the theory of Brewster is required for the production of the single perspective resultant. Hence according to this theory the resultant spectrum in these experiments, instead of being a single line in a perspective position, ought to present the form of two lines inclined or crossing, situated in the plane of the wall without projection or relief.

In reference to the first two experiments it might perhaps be maintained that as the perspectiveness of the original line or resultant on which the eyes were converged formed part of the direct perception in the first stage of the experiment, it would be likely through association to be included also in the spectral or subjective perception. But this consideration, which at best does not impress me as of much weight, is entirely inapplicable to the conditions of the last experiment, where the eyes are in the first place impressed *in succession* with their respective images, and where yet when they are together directed to the wall, *the perspective single resultant at once springs into view.*

4. Without resorting to these troublesome efforts of subjective vision, the following is a simple proof that pictures *successively* impressed on the respective eyes are sufficient for the stereoscopic

effect. Let a screen be made to vibrate or revolve somewhat rapidly between the eyes and the twin pictures of a stereoscope, so as alternately to expose and cover each, *completely excluding the simultaneous vision of the two*. The stereoscopic relief will be as apparent in these conditions as when the moving screen is withdrawn.

Here there is no opportunity for the combination of pairs of corresponding points in the two diagrams by the simultaneous convergence of the optic axes through them, but at each moment the actual picture in the one eye, and the retained impression in the other, form the elements of the perspective resultant which we perceive.

5. The ingenious experiments described by Prof. Dove many years ago in which the stereoscopic effect was obtained by the momentary illumination of the electric flash, furnish a further and most powerful argument against the theory of successive binocular combination here referred to.

In repeating these I have found great advantage in using one of Ritchie's improved Ruhmkorff coils having a coated jar included in the outer circuit, the intensely brilliant spark of which can be made to throw its light upon the object viewed in any direction or at any interval that may be desired.

When a twin-diagram of any simple geometrical solid was placed in the stereoscope and viewed by this momentary light it was found to exhibit the perspective resultant in most cases with a single spark, and it never failed to present it in perfection with a succession of sparks even when they followed each other slowly.

A large circular disc of brass, marked with the usual concentric striæ, was placed in a position to catch the illumination and produce the peculiar intersecting lines of reflected light. At each spark the bright resultant line due to the binocular union of these intersecting lines was seen penetrating the disc and extending in a steep angle beyond and in front of it.

As, according to Wheatstone, the duration of an electric spark is less than one-millionth of a second, it can hardly be supposed that in either of these experiments the eyes have time to make the successive changes of direction required, by the theory, for the singleness and relief of the observed resultant. Not less at variance with this theory is the familiar fact that the illumination of a single flash of lightning is sufficient to give us a clear perception of the forms and positions of objects to which the eyes are for the moment directed. So the long straight spark of one of Geissler's narrow vacuum tubes, glowing for an instant in a dark room, impresses a precise perception of the attitude and place of the tube and its included line of light; and even their regular path of the long spark through the air produces a distinct perception single and faithful to its devious directions.

We may therefore conclude,—

First, *that the perception of an object in its proper relief, or that of the perspective resultant through binocular combination in a stereoscope or otherwise may and most usually does arise by direct suggestion from the two pictures impressed, without requiring the successive combination of corresponding points ;—and,*

Second, *that for the singleness of the resultant perception it is not necessary that the images should fall on what are called corresponding parts of the two retinas.*

The condition of single vision in such cases seems to be simply this, that the pictures in the two eyes shall be such and so placed as to be identical with the pictures which the real object would make at a given distance and in a given attitude before the eyes.

# ON OUR INABILITY FROM THE RETINAL IMPRESSION

ALONE TO DETERMINE WHICH

## RETINA IS IMPRESSED.

BY PROF. WILLIAM B. ROGERS.

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[Read before the Am. Assoc. for the Advancement of Sci., at Newport, Aug. 1860.]

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ALTHOUGH on first view it might be supposed that an impression made in either eye must necessarily be accompanied by a mental reference to the particular organ impressed, it will be seen from the following simple experiments that the impression of itself is not essentially suggestive of the special retinal surface on which it is received.

Exp. 1. Let a short tube of black pasteboard  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in diameter be fixed in a hole in the centre of a large sheet of the same material. Hold the sheet a few inches before the face of a second person and between him and a bright window, moving it to and fro until the bright circular aperture of the tube is brought directly in front of one of the eyes, suppose the left eye; and let him fix his attention upon the sky or cloud to which the tube is directed. He will feel as if the impression or image of the hole *belongs equally to both eyes* and will be unable to determine which of them really receives the light.

On moving the aperture towards the right, or nearer the nose, but not so far as to be out of the view of the left eye, or to be visible by the right, the observer will imagine that it is now in front of the right eye and chiefly seen by it. Shifting it still further in the same direction, until it is brought within view of the right eye but not fairly in front of it, it will appear as if placed before the left eye, and by an additional motion bringing it fairly in front of the right eye it will seem to be equally before both eyes or to be in the medial line between them.

Like effects may be observed by using a half sheet of rather stiff foolscap with a large pin hole in the centre. Bending this over the face and moving it until the hole is in front of one of



the eyes, the same uncertainty and contradiction will be produced as in the preceding experiment.

Exp. 2. Similar results may be obtained by rolling half a sheet of letter paper into a tube of about one inch in diameter, and holding it before and a little in advance of one eye while both are directed to a white wall some feet distant. Keeping the view *fixed* upon the wall there will be seen upon its surface a circular image of the remote aperture of the tube. This as we look intently at it will appear as if seen equally by both eyes, occupying a midway position between them. If now the eyes be converged to some point nearer than the end of the tube the circular image will appear against the side of the tube giving the impression that it is seen by the eye which is remote from the tube and is at the same time directed toward the outside. For the complete success of this experiment the wall should be only moderately bright, and but little light should fall on the exterior of the tube next the uncovered eye.

Exp. 3. Let two tubes of stiff paper each one inch in diameter and six inches long be held close to the two eyes in a converging direction so that the outer ends may touch each other. Then directing the view through them to a white wall at a short distance, the observer will see the two tubes as one, with a single circular opening clearly marked out on the wall. If now a small object as the end of the little finger be brought near and in front of one of the tubes, it will take its place within this circle and will seem to be equally an object of vision to both eyes, so that the observer will be wholly unable to decide before which eye it is actually placed.

Let the observer next direct his view to a very remote object, as the sky, seen through the window, still retaining the previous adjustment of the tubes. He will now see two circles, continuing separate as long as he keeps his eyes fixed on the distant surface; and if the finger be held up as before in front of one of the tubes it will appear within the circle which is in front of *the other eye*; thus causing the impression on the right eye to be apparently transposed to the left, and vice versa.

Exp. 4. Fasten a small disc of white paper on a slip of black pasteboard of the size suitable for a stereoscope, and place this in the instrument so that the white spot shall be centrally in front of one of the glasses.

To a person not aware of the position of the spot it will appear in the stereoscope as if equally in view to both eyes and he will be entirely unable to decide on which retina its picture is impressed. Indeed properly considered the spot does not appear directly in front of either eye but is seen at the intersection of the optic axes, in the medial or binocular direction between the two.

Let the spot be now moved toward the right side but still within the range of the left eye and it will seem to be before the right eye rather than the left. Shift it into the right compartment but not far from the dividing line and it will appear as if seen chiefly by the left eye, and finally bring it to the middle of the right compartment and it will seem as at first to belong equally to both eyes.\*

Referring to the results observed in the above experiments when the object is directly in front of either eye it may be concluded that the mere retinal impression, on either eye is unaccompanied by any consciousness of the special surface impressed, and that the formation of the visual perception appertains to that part of the optical apparatus near or within the brain, *which belongs in common to both eyes.*

These observations show moreover that the *perceived direction is just as truly normal to the central part of the retina which has received no light as to that of the retina on which the white spot has been painted.* Indeed as before indicated, it is normal to neither, but is felt to be in the middle line between the two, that is, in the binocular direction. It need scarcely be added that this conclusion is at variance with the law of visible direction maintained by Brewster, which requires that the apparent direction of an object shall in all cases be normal to the part of the retina impressed.

The reference of the object in certain cases above noticed, (parts of 1, 2 and 4) to *one eye chiefly*, and that the eye from which *it is actually hidden*, is accounted for by the direction in which the other eye receives the light. As this direction, in the case of the left eye for instance, would be decidedly toward the field of view of the right eye, it would at once suggest the place of the object as somewhere before that eye, and so when the object is actually before the right eye, but in a position towards the left, it would excite the idea of an object somewhere before the left eye. As the retinal picture alone gives no indication of the particular eye in which it is formed, but only excites a visual consciousness common to both, the object in these cases will seem to be visible by both eyes but chiefly by that before which the suggestion just mentioned would naturally place it.

A like explanation applies to the transposition observed in Exp. 3, when the view is directed to a distance through the converging tubes. Here the false visual reference of the finger depends on the fact that the circle in front of either eye is sugges-

\* The effect here described is one of a series of phenomena which Dr. O. W. Holmes attributes to an *actual transfer* of impressions from one eye to the other, and which he proposes to explain by the hypothesis of reflex vision. Proc. Am. Acad. Arts and Sciences, Feb. 1860.



tive, merely by its position, of a *special vision by that eye*, while from the conditions of the experiment these circles are in fact reversed in their places as compared with the tubes and eyes to which they appertain.

We have seen in the above experiments that when an object is presented to one eye without any accompanying circumstances leading us to refer the visual act specially to this or to the other eye we have a consciousness of seeing it equally with both eyes. *The same result occurs when separate objects are presented to the two eyes*, provided as before, extraneous sources of suggestion are excluded.

Exp. 5. Thus if we place on the black slide of the stereoscope two spots, differing either in shape or color, one before each eye, we perceive them both in the middle or binocular direction, each seemingly visible in an equal degree to both eyes, the one being seen through or upon the other according to the fitful attention or suggestion of the moment. A pleasing modification of this experiment is made by using two unequal white spots on the black slide and interposing a green or other colored glass between one of them and the lens. The spot which appears colored will give as strongly the impression of being seen by both eyes as the white one, in spite of our knowledge of the position of the colored glass.

Even in cases where the two objects are wholly unlike, and at very different distances from the eyes by which they are severally regarded, this feeling of a common or united visual act in regard to each of them is often easily recognized. Of this we have a ready illustration in the familiar experiment on ocular parallax in which a distant object, hidden from one eye by an interposed finger or pencil, is seen through or behind the pencil when both eyes are directed towards the distant object.

Exp. 6. To observe this effect satisfactorily it is well to make the experiment in an apartment in which a single small lamp is placed at some distance from the spot on which we stand. Looking intently at the lamp, we bring the pencil before the face in such position as to give us an image on each side of the lamp, and then move the pencil toward the right until its left hand image seems to coincide in direction and position with the lamp, which appears to shine through or to partially replace it. As we continue to look thus at the lamp, we have a clear impression that both lamp and pencil are equally visible to both eyes, and without some consideration of the previous adjustment and motions we are unable to determine which is actually visible to the right and which to the left eye.

The same experiment furnishes also an incidental illustration of the principle of *transposed* visual reference before alluded to.

If, while the above adjustment is maintained, we contemplate the other image of the pencil situated some distance to the right of the lamp, and endeavor to decide, from the mere visual impression, to which eye it appertains, we almost unfailingly refer it to the right eye as that which most nearly fronts it, although obviously it belongs to the other, as will be found at once on closing either eye.

Where the eyes are externally very sensitive, any strong illumination of one as compared with the other will interfere with the effect above described by referring the impression specially to the eye thus unduly excited. In such cases the observation is best made in a moderately lighted room by interposing the pencil between the eye and a vertical stripe on the wall.

Exp. 7. Recurring to Exp. 2, in which with a tube in front of one eye we perceive a bright circle on the wall in the medial direction, we may obtain a pleasing illustration of the point now under consideration by bringing a dark card or book or even the hand between the uncovered eye and the wall. The spot instead of being intercepted will appear as a perforation in the opaque screen.

Here as in the case of the pencil and lamp, the bright circle and the screen are both optically referred to the intersection of the two lines of view. But the luminous circle almost or entirely obliterates the corresponding part of the screen. As the full view of the screen and its connections continually remind us that it is in front of the uncovered eye, we are led to refer the luminous circle seen as coincident with a part of it, to the same eye, and thus to believe that *we are looking through the screen with that eye*. It is however not difficult, by intently regarding the luminous circle, so to counteract the force of this extraneous suggestion as to feel even in this case as if the circle were equally in view to both eyes.

These considerations explain very simply the experiment of the pseudo-diascope described by Mr. Ward of Manchester, which like several of those above mentioned is but an instance of the old observation of Da Vinci, that when we see behind a small opaque object presented near the eyes "it becomes as it were transparent." In making this experiment with a tube of paper supported between the thumb and forefinger of the left hand and held before the right eye so that the back of the hand may be some inches in advance of the left eye, it will be noticed that the effect varies with the amount of convergence of the eyes and that the bright perforation in the hand *may or may not* be referred to the left eye according to the force of the accessary suggestions or the intentness with which we fix our gaze upon the distant spot to which the axes are converged.

In conclusion, it may be remarked that the experiments which have been described, are for the most part too obvious and familiar to have merited such a special notice but for the peculiar and in some respects new interpretation which they have offered of many visual phenomena. Considered in this relation we are I think entitled to conclude from them,

First, that *the retinal impression of an object presented directly to either eye is accompanied by the feeling of a united visual act, and of itself gives no indication of the particular eye impressed; and*

Second, that *the reference of the impression to one eye rather than the other is the result of collateral suggestion, which may either locate the image in the eye that actually receives it, or may transpose it seemingly to the other, according to the particular conditions of the observation.*









fashion of the day ; but to know a few things well demands a much more healthful effort of the mind, and enriches it proportionally.

If Mr. Hunt's book leads persons to seek to know more than he tells them, it is a useful publication ; but if it is regarded as sufficient by itself, we cannot say much for those who make use of it ; because it can do little more than satisfy a childish love for the wonderful. We believe the author intended that his work should serve the better purpose ; for his own mind seems to be elevated and enriched by his studies, and excited to draw others to the contemplation of that which evidently gives him so much pleasure. We hope that the time may come when the popular mind may be so far enlightened, that the poet and the orator may draw illustrations from science without making themselves unintelligible ; but it will be from the beautiful adaptations of nature, rather than from its wonders, that they will feed the fires of inspiration. Whatever view we may take of the value of many of the popular scientific books of the day, their number and their ready sale show that the public mind is awake, as it never was before, to subjects that were formerly entirely sealed from its inquiry ; and while we look in dismay upon the heap of worse than useless trash that now answers the demand for "cheap reading," we may draw some consolation from the pile of scientific volumes, which is ever growing higher and broader.

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ART. VII. — *The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind : an Autobiographical Poem.* By WILLIAM WORDSWORTH. New York : D. Appleton & Co. 1850. 12mo.

*Memoirs of WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, Poet-Laureate, D. C. L.* By CHRISTOPHER WORDSWORTH, D. D., Canon of Westminster. Edited by HENRY REED. Boston : Ticknor, Reed, & Fields. 1851. 2 vols. 12mo.

FUTURE ages will confirm the decision upon which this age has nearly agreed ; that Wordsworth is the greatest

English poet since Milton, and in some sense the father of a nobler and loftier school of poetry than any which had before appeared. These titles are his not so much on account of the preëminence of his powers, as of the direction he gave them. He is not the greatest of poets, but his poetry is of the highest kind; it deals with the noblest subjects, and appeals to the noblest faculties and susceptibilities. No other bard has with so potent an imagination clothed with forms of majestic beauty the loftiest abstractions of the intellect, and the shadowy conceptions of duty and immortality; no other has so divinely sung

— “The thoughts that make  
The life of souls, — the truths for whose sweet sake  
We to ourselves and to our God are dear.”

Though Wordsworth does not challenge admiration by the colossal grandeur of his powers, like the few myriad-minded poets, who, appearing at long intervals, have been crowned by the common consent of mankind as the monarchs of song, he rises into a higher atmosphere than they, and brings under the magic power of verse loftier themes.

Hence he has won a higher name than the relative greatness of his intellect would otherwise assign him. Indeed, the explanation of the superiority of his poetry is to be found not so much, perhaps, in the greatness of his mind, as in the character of his age and of the influences which surrounded him. In its excellencies, we gratefully recognize the fruit of eighteen centuries of Christianity, of six thousand years of human struggle and progress. He lived, too, in one of those periods when what has long been maturing in silence bursts suddenly upon the world, and all the energies of man seem to start forth at once in newness of life. In civil affairs, it was the age of revolutions, when men cast off the old institutions they had outgrown, and boldly grappled with the highest problems of government and social being. In philosophy, the purer system of the idealistic school was dealing a death-blow to the sneering skepticism and cold materialism which had weighed down the powers and aspirations of mankind; and the doctrine of the existence of the pure reason, whose truth the greatest men of all ages had at least dimly recognized and felt, was for the first time clearly developed and set forth, vindicating the native dignity of the human mind against the degrading

views which would chain it down to earth-born objects and quench its noblest longings. In all departments of thought and action, it was a period of daring speculation and restless activity ; but to represent in one word the influences most potent in moulding the mind of Wordsworth, it was the age of the metaphysics of Kant and of the French Revolution.

We have had other poets in this period who were more faithful exponents of the passion and the struggle of the age ; but if they represent its active spirit, Wordsworth represents the principles which underlie the action. The manifold activities of the times spread before his philosophic vision a rare field for contemplation. In calm retirement from its busy scenes, he looked out upon the stir, *spectator ab extra*, as Coleridge has called him, and saw the meaning of the conflict, to which the combatants themselves, in the engrossing interest of the struggle, are often blind. By this interested and attentive observation of the action, as well as by his thorough familiarity with the philosophical speculation of the age, he was enabled to represent most truly the thought and contemplative sentiment of his times.

If the poetry of Wordsworth, then, rises to higher themes than that of his predecessors, it is because it is the product of a longer period of human development, springing from a mind enriched by the experience and speculation of the past, and alive to all the influences of the present. The progress of mankind in self-knowledge, or, at least, in the habit of self-reflection and introspection, and the increase with time of the mind's disposition to direct its thoughts to the field of contemplation, rather than to that of action, is strikingly exemplified in the history of poetical literature. Homer gives a fresh, hearty, glowing description of events, unmixed with any philosophical speculations and abstractions ; action, and not reflection, is the staple of his song. Several centuries of advancing culture and refinement at length produce their fruit in the Greek tragedians, —

— “ teachers best  
Of moral prudence, with delight received  
In brief sententious precepts, while they treat  
Of fate, and chance, and change in human life,  
High actions and high passions best describing.”

A later age brings forth the polished Virgil, whose taste and elegance evince his careful study of old writers, and who,

inferior as he is to Homer, far surpasses his Greek model in the exquisite pathos of his delineations of human suffering. In Dante, we see for the first time clearly the elevating influence of Christianity upon the poetic art. His *Divine Comedy*, says Mr. Alison, "reveals the inmost man in a way which bespeaks the centuries of self-reflection in the cloister which preceded it; it is the basis of all the spiritual poetry of modern, as the *Iliad* is of all the external imagery of ancient, times." It is a Gothic temple, a magnificent embodiment of faith and aspiration; but, as the beautiful arabesque of its ornaments is made up of apparently discordant materials from the ancient and modern world, so its lofty spiritual views are strangely modified by and mingled with the material conceptions of the classic pagans. "The Sabbath of Christendom, when the fierce, stormful elements of mediæval chaos first appeared in a beautiful and beneficent creation, and the genius of modern civilization, resting from his long labors, first smiled upon the works of his hands," gave Shakspeare to the world; whose all-comprehensive mind embraced in its view every characteristic, every capacity, nay, every yet untried possibility, of human nature. And then, in the next generation, in those stirring times of conflict between the spirit of freedom and civil and ecclesiastical tyranny, the lofty and exquisitely-cultured mind of Milton sought strength and inspiration in communion with its Maker, and in the consecration of its powers to the welfare of man and all noblest ends. *Therefore* it was that he was enabled to build up a temple of song, the holiest and the most beautiful ever reared by mortal hands; —

"Ergo, vivida vis animi pervicit, et extra  
Processit longe flammantia mœnia mundi,  
Atque omne immensum peragravit mente animoque."

Wordsworth is not the intellectual peer of these great men; but the author of the *Excursion*, and of the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*, has added to the mighty edifice of song a turret of exquisite beauty, which rises nearer to the skies than any other of its pinnacles or towers.

We would not be understood as claiming too much. It is advance in one direction that we have been tracing, not in all; in a complete view, there are retrograde movements, as well as onward, to be taken in survey. We believe in human progress; we believe that the good providence of God is



leading the race of man by slow but constant steps to loftier heights of excellence, that the work of His hands may redound more and more to His glory. And we trace this progress in literature, as well as in every other department of human activity. But at the same time, we trust we are free from that contemptible conceit and ignorance which magnifies the present and sneers at the past. The proper contemplation of the progress of the world humbles the mind, instead of ministering to self-complacency. It is to the men of other days, and not to ourselves, that we owe all our superior advantages. We have entered into their labors ; and, as we have received from them the priceless legacy of their noble deeds and noble thoughts, we are unfaithful stewards unless we transmit with usury the inheritance to our successors. We must go beyond our fathers, to equal them in merit ; we must do what we can to complete what they begun ; and we shall aim to do this influenced not by the pride of our fancied superiority, but by the generous emulation of their virtues. It is too often forgotten, that whatever superiority the present may boast, exists, after all, not in the men of to-day, but only in their surroundings.

“ When we draw out, through the cloud of steam, majestic white horses,  
Are we greater than the first men, who led black ones by the mane ? ”

In saying, then, that Wordsworth may be called, in some sense, the father of a higher school of poetry than any which had before appeared, we by no means imply that his is the greatest poetical genius with which the world has been blessed, or that his works surpass all others in beauty, or power, or usefulness. That cannot be an increasing series of poetic greatness which begins with Homer. If, in our moments of noblest aspiration, we fasten our gaze with delight upon the heavenward-striving spires which Wordsworth has raised upon the great temple of song, not the less do we regard with reverential admiration the grand and eternal arches upon which the whole fabric rests, laid by the elder poets, with their foundations in the depths of the human heart, and the lofty columns of strength and beauty reared by the bards of successive ages, from whose pediments the topmost turrets spring as their proper crown and complement, and without whose support they would tumble in ruins. Narrow and one-sided would be the poetic cultivation of that mind

which made such poetry as Wordsworth's its exclusive object of admiration, and did not often feed upon the more palpable creations of the poets who embody the stirring strifes and passions and the outward realities of life. Especially in this day, when there is so much morbid sentimentalism, and false, obtrusive spirituality, is it well to go back to old Homer and Chaucer, and make them and kindred bards the substratum of æsthetic culture.

We do not purpose to enter upon a discussion of the intellectual characteristics of Wordsworth. At various times, during the sixty years of his poetic life and the year that has elapsed since his death, the task has been attempted, with more or less ability, by critics small and great. But there is one field in which his prowess has been so glorious, his trophies so far outshining those of other bards, that we may well turn our eyes upon it. It is as an interpreter of nature, revealing the meaning of the lessons which the works of the outward creation are designed to convey to man, that Wordsworth has won his peculiar and highest distinction, and excelled every other author. The love of nature, like a taste for music, sculpture, painting, and the other elegant arts, manifests itself in a higher or lower form in different individuals. Many passionate admirers of the beauties of the outward universe receive nothing more than an exquisite sensuous delight from their contemplation. A vivid sensibility to the beautiful in form and color, a delicious joy in bathing in the sunshine and the clear air, the ear charmed with the hum of insects, the murmuring of waters, the rustling of leaves, and the song of birds, flowers of beautiful form and fragrance around, and a varied landscape of hills and rocks and plains and forests before, — this is, indeed, a love of nature which raises its possessor far above the insensible herd who have eyes but see not, and ears but hear not, — a love which soothes and calms the troubled spirit, and is genial and refining in all its influences; but it is not the highest and the best. Such is the passion of Keats, — carried, indeed, in his case, to a morbid excess. In revelling in his descriptions, there is a delicious and dreamy, but often unwholesome, luxury. His poetry evinces how tremblingly alive was his delicate physical organization to all outward influences, and betrays that susceptibility and power of re-



alizing even his imaginations, which made him, when lying in his last sickness, already "*feel* the daisies growing over him." There are other poets to whom the voices of nature have a deeper meaning, — who read in them the power and presence of God, and the unfailing bounty of his goodness. But no one of these seems so completely possessed and haunted with an intelligent love and appreciation of the highest uses of nature, to be so admitted to her inmost shrines, to dwell so continually in her presence and live upon the lessons falling from her lips, as Wordsworth. He is alive to all her delicate sensuous influences; but to this "organic pleasure" there is added a nobler emotion, which feels in all, in every sight and sound that pleases, the manifestation of the omnipresent Power:

———"A sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
*Whose dwelling* is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean, and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man."

The records of his life show that all his days were passed at Nature's feet; his works, chiefly composed in the open air,\* were as lessons recited in his teacher's presence; and so completely did she breathe into him her spirit, so thoroughly was his mind moulded by her influence, so universally was she the model and the inspiration of his verse, that we do not hesitate to assert that it is impossible for any one to understand and appreciate the full meaning and beauty of Wordsworth's poetry, who has not prepared himself by a diligent study and fond admiration of nature. Few who are familiar with nature's lovely or awful forms will be found among the sneerers at Wordsworth's genius; and if it is charged that the party of his professed admirers is swelled by some weak and puling pretenders, it can be retorted that the opposing party derives no small part of its numbers from men

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\* "‘Nine tenths of my verses,’ says Wordsworth, ‘have been murmured out in the open air.’ And here let me repeat what I believe has already appeared in print. One day a stranger, having walked round the garden and grounds of Rydal Mount, asked of one of the female servants, who happened to be at the door, permission to see her master’s study. ‘This,’ said she, leading him forward, ‘is my master’s *library*, where he keeps his books; but his *study* is out of doors.’” — *Memoirs*, vol. ii. pp. 75, 76.

We may mention here, that the greater part of Wordsworth’s poems were dictated to members of his family or household, as he had a strange repugnance to the task of writing.

whose perverted taste prefers the artificial to the natural, the glare and meretricious show of a theatre to the mild light and simple majesty of nature, and the startling and extravagant in literature to the simple and profound. The poetry of Wordsworth resembles nature in the still repose of its first impression, the calm though elevated feeling it awakens at first perusal, broadening and deepening into intenser emotion as the mind grows up into a full comprehension of its meaning and its power. It is as true of his verse, as of a thing of beauty in the outward world, that *its loveliness increases*. They who, having taken up his volumes, soon throw them down in disgust because they are not startled and overpowered at once, remind us of the recent English tourist, who, before the awful sublimity of Niagara, unsatisfied with that which his mind was not yet fitted to appreciate, impatiently declared he "longed for Alps and Andes, all around."

Such influences as those of nature and our poet's works are precisely those most requisite in an artificial age, whose bustle and activity tend to engross the mind and withdraw it from simple pleasures. It is one of the most cheering signs of the times that, in art and literature, there is a growing disposition to prefer truth and nature to exaggeration and fictitious display. No small share of the honor of promoting this healthful disposition is due to Wordsworth. Simultaneously with this tendency in literature, the study of natural science is asserting its native dignity as the handmaid of religion, seeing in the structures it examines the visible expressions of the great Architect's conceptions, and in the diversified wonders of creation the affiliated portions of one consistent plan. Thus the philosopher and the poet receive each from nature the same ennobling influences and priceless lessons.\* To neither does she disclose her most valuable

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\* Philosophers of every age have recognized the moral teachings which the order and unerring constancy of the various operations of nature are designed to give. "*Homo ortus est ad mundum contemplandum et imitandum*," is a sentiment which appears, in various forms, in the works of nearly all the sages of old. The adaptation of the facts of natural science to illustrate truths in the moral world we have often seen happily exemplified in the instructions of one of the most illustrious naturalists of our age, whom it is every American's happiness and pride to call an adopted fellow-citizen. One instance suggests itself to us. In a course of lectures which Professor Agassiz, with characteristic generosity, volunteered to deliver before the pupils of the High School in Cambridge, a very minute and exact description was given, in one day's exercise, of the structure and growth

secrets, if approached as independent in herself and self-existent, but only when regarded as subordinate to a higher power, by which she is constantly sustained and moved. The *mere* naturalist, engrossed in technicalities, who does not approach his subject with reverent feelings and in the light of enlarged generalizations, is one of the most narrow-minded of men. Neither he, nor the poet who sees in the outward universe nothing more than a spectacle of mere material beauty, can ever win true distinction in his art.\*

Another striking feature in the character of Wordsworth, and one of the noblest elements of his strength, is his entire self-consecration to the work he conceived to be his. Few lives were ever so faithfully and earnestly devoted to one great end. In early youth, he believed himself "singled out for holy services" as a poet; and every circumstance of his subsequent life was made subservient to this chosen purpose. From all the homely incidents of his daily experience, from the instructive appearances of nature which chanced to meet his eye, the traits of human character and passion he saw exhibited in the cottage or by the wayside, he strove to seize whatever useful lesson, whatever truth of universal interest, whatever important and fundamental principle, they were adapted to convey, and embody it in his song; and thus his verse was necessarily original from its origin, and valuable and noble from the principles which directed its composition. Wordsworth always held before himself a lofty standard of excellence, a high ideal of the dignity and responsibility of his office. His own words will best show how high was this

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of the caterpillar, with its transformations into the chrysalis and the butterfly. The lecturer particularly directed the attention of his delighted young listeners to the perfect uniformity and regularity in the life of this insect; not an individual deviating from the regular order of his species, or failing to accomplish the ends of his existence. "To this regularity," said the professor, "Man forms the only lamentable exception in nature. Owing to his freedom, he often errs, violates law, and fails to fulfil his destiny." "Boys," he continued, in a low earnest tone, and with his peculiarly winning manner, riveting the attention of every person in the room, "I hope that no one of *you* will fail to accomplish the ends for which he is created; but may you all, like the caterpillar, ever live in perfect obedience to all the laws of your being!" The interesting scientific descriptions of structure and development, — the result of original investigations, and often of such as had never before been ~~discussed~~ made known to the world, — hardly produced a deeper impression than the lessons of fidelity which they were made, in these lectures, to convey.

\* The charges ignorantly brought against Wordsworth of pantheistic tendencies are refuted by his nephew in the *Memoirs*, vol. i. pp. 119, 120.



standard, and how faithfully he labored to conform himself to it. "Every great poet is a teacher. I wish to be considered as a teacher, or as nothing." (*Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 342.) Again, to a gentleman who had written to him in commendation of his works, he says, —

"You have given me praise for having reflected faithfully in my poems the feelings of human nature. I would fain hope that I have done so. But a great poet ought to do more than this; he ought, to a certain degree, to rectify men's feelings, to give them new compositions of feeling, to render their feelings more sane, pure, and permanent; in short, more consonant to nature, that is, to eternal nature, and the great moving spirit of things. He ought to travel before men occasionally, as well as at their sides." Vol. i. p. 198.

"There is scarcely one of my poems," he writes to Lady Beaumont, in 1807, "which does not aim to direct the attention to some moral sentiment, or to some general principle, or law of thought, or of our mental constitution. . . . I doubt not that you will share with me an invincible confidence that my writings will coöperate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, wherever found; and that they will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier." Vol. i. pp. 336, 339 — 340.

It was this consciousness of the nobleness of his aims, and confidence that his works were based upon principles founded in unchangeable truth, that consoled him in the time when his poems were almost overwhelmed in derision, and made him foresee the inevitable future of imperishable fame which awaited them. In the path, then, he had chosen, he pursued steadily his way, with a purity of motive that cannot be questioned, and a persevering energy that never tired. This honest and steadfast devotion to a great work must command the admiration of all who can appreciate what is noble and worthy, whether they assent or not to the soundness of Wordsworth's theory.

"It is such an animating sight," to use again the poet's words, "to see a man of genius, regardless of temporary gains, whether of money or praise, fixing his attention solely upon what is intrinsically interesting and permanent, and finding his happiness in an entire devotion of himself to such pursuits as ~~shall most~~ ennoble human nature. We have not yet seen enough of this in modern times; and never was there a period in society when such examples were likely to do more good than at present." Vol. i. p. 267.

In our high estimate of Wordsworth's genius, we are not unwilling to acknowledge his deficiencies. He has no claims to the title of a "myriad-minded" poet; indeed, there was somewhat of one-sidedness in his mental constitution and the development of his poetic faculty; nor are the form and style of his compositions absolutely faultless. The charming simplicity which characterizes his language sometimes degenerates into childish homeliness, especially in his early poems, in which his peculiar theory was often carried to excess. By none has this defect been pointed out more clearly than by Coleridge, one of Wordsworth's most ardent, and, as some would say, extravagant admirers.\* Again, our author sometimes nods, and, in his *Excursion* and other long works, is occasionally prosy. If the reader faint not, however, he is sure to be well repaid in the end.

"Large lumps of precious metal lie engulph  
In gravelly beds, whence you must delve them out,  
And thirst sometimes and hunger; shudder not  
To wield the pickaxe and to shake the sieve."†

It must be confessed, too, that when the author seems tedious, the fault is often in the reader; let him give the poet another hearing, when he is wide awake himself, and he will generally find something worthy, both in form and substance,

\* Yet Coleridge himself wrote the so much ridiculed stanza in "*We are Seven*," "A simple child, dear brother *Jem*," — and Wordsworth did not adopt it without objecting to its ludicrous character.

† These lines were written by Walter Savage Landor, with reference to the *Excursion*. Mr. Landor, (as Professor Reed states in a note on p. 51, vol. ii. of the *Memoirs*.) has elsewhere expressed his admiration of Wordsworth in Latin prose, by apostrophizing him as follows, after reprobating the class of splenetic critics: "At quibus ego te vocibus compellem, vir, civis, philosophe, poeta, præstantissime! qui sæculum nostrum ut nullo priore minus gloriosum sit effeceris; quem nec domicilium longinquum, nec vita sanctissima, neque optimorum voluntas, charitas, propensio, neque hominum fere universorum reverentia, inviolatum conservavit; cujus sepulchrum, si mortuus esses anteaquam nascerentur, ut voti rei inviserent, et laudi sibi magnæ ducerent vel aspicere vel credi ibidem ingemiscere." — *De Cultu atque Usu Latini Sermonis. Pisis.* MDCCCXX. p. 215. We may refer, in this connection, to the dedication of Professor Keble's *Prælections on Poetry*, delivered before the University of Oxford, and inscribed to Mr. Wordsworth, of whom it speaks as one "cui illud munus tribuit Deus Opt. Max. ut, sive hominum affectus caneret, sive terrarum et cæli pulchritudinem, legendum animos semper ad sanctiora erigeret, semper a pauperum et simpliciorum partibus staret, atque adeo, labente sæculo, existeret non solum dulcissimæ Poeseos, verum etiam divinæ Veritatis antistes." "This inscription," says the poet's biographer, "was particularly grateful to Mr. Wordsworth. He regarded the expressions 'ad sanctiora erigeret,' as a very happy delineation of what he, as a poet, had endeavored to perform." Lord Byron speaks of the commendation of Americans as being to European genius like the applause of posterity. To hear one's praise in the majestic tones of the Latin language, is like receiving from antiquity its approving sanction. It was Wordsworth's felicity to hear both of these voices.

of his best attention. After all proper deductions are made, Wordsworth still presents one of the best models of style in our language. If we complain of the undignified simpleness of some of his most faulty works, ever let us hold him in honor for his effective services in recalling the taste of the English people from an artificial and stilted style to one that is natural and unaffected, and giving a healthy tone to his country's literature. And, considering his productions as a whole, the language of his biographer is just, "that among all the poets of England, none has surpassed him in elaborate workmanship, both in the form and expression of his thoughts." Few writers have given us better specimens of pure, chaste, significant, graceful English; few have wrought out more felicitous expressions, and uttered more sentences, — every word a picture or the germ of a great thought, — which, from their lifelike force and truthfulness, have passed into the proverbs of elevated discourse. In his prose compositions, his style is perspicuous, sustained, and lofty; the tract on the "Convention of Cintra" is worthy of the high eulogium of Canning, who pronounced it "the most eloquent production since the days of Burke."

The works named at the head of this article supply all the information that can be expected in regard to the important incidents in the life of Wordsworth, and the circumstances by which his intellectual character was moulded. The autobiographical poem, begun in 1799, and finished in June, 1805, covers a period extending from the time

"In which a babe, by intercourse of touch,  
He held mute dialogue with his mother's heart,"

*matured* to that in which his ~~general~~ powers were deliberately consecrated to a poet's work. It was published in 1850, after the death of its author; and the name it bears, "The Prelude," was given it by Mrs. Wordsworth as indicating the relation in which her husband intended it should stand to the "Recluse," — a philosophical poem "containing Views of Man, Nature, and Society," of which only the second part, the Excursion, was finished and given to the world; the first book of the first part exists in manuscript, but the third part was only planned. The complete history of the growth of any mind would be a work of universal and most intense interest, could it ever be written; and the story of the growth of such



a mind as Wordsworth's, — however imperfectly, from the necessity of the case, it must be told, — cannot but be welcomed with delight and studied with advantage. The author attempts no unachievable portrait of all the myriad, multiform emotions of the soul, nor does he undertake “to parcel out his intellect by geometric rules;” but he has a full sense of the difficulty of his high argument, — often prompting “breathings for incommunicable powers.” He has succeeded, however, in presenting a vivid picture of the scenes of his early life, with many delicate delineations of the influences, subtle or direct, by which his mind was moulded; thus giving a general view of the progress of his mental growth. This poem, in connection with the other works of its author, presents one of the best studies for the psychologist which literature anywhere affords, and is perhaps as complete and valuable an exposition of the mysterious development of a mighty intellect as will ever be given to the world.

Like most works of genius, the *Prelude* is read with an interest heightening on each successive perusal. The style is simple, but elegant, often flowing along in a quiet philosophic strain, but rising ever and anon into glowing eloquence; and the reader's admiration is constantly excited by felicitous expression or elevated sentiment. The poet thus depicts the mental emotions of one who has won his way to a station on a mountain's top, in lines addressed to Coleridge, then in Italy: —

“Thou wilt stand  
On Etna's summit, above earth and sea,  
Triumphant, *winning from the invaded heavens*  
*Thoughts without bound.*” p. 314.

The address to the powers of Nature, in the twelfth book, is a fair specimen of the general ease and beauty of the style.

“Ye motions of delight, that haunt the sides  
Of the green hills; ye breezes and soft airs,  
Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,  
Feelingly watched, might teach man's haughty race  
How without injury to take, to give  
Without offence; ye who, as if to show  
The wondrous influence of power gently used,  
Bend the complying heads of lordly pines,  
And, with a touch, shift the stupendous clouds

Through the whole compass of the sky ; ye brooks,  
 Muttering along the stones, a busy noise  
 By day, a quiet sound in silent night ;  
 Ye waves, *that out of the great deep steal forth*  
*In a calm hour to kiss the pebbly shore,*  
 Not mute, and then retire, fearing no storm ;  
 And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is  
 To interpose the covert of your shades,  
 Even as a sleep, between the heart of man  
 And outward troubles, between man himself,  
 Not seldom, and his own uneasy heart :  
 Oh ! that I had a music and a voice  
 Harmonious as your own, that I might tell  
 What ye have done for me.” pp. 317 – 318.

The fifth book contains an acknowledgment of the author's indebtedness to a source of culture to which, in his more frequent references to nature in other parts of his writings, he seldom refers, — the world of *books*. In the commencement, the poet declares his sorrow and throbbings of the heart, upon reflecting that the deathless mind is forced to lodge her powers “in shrines so frail,” and that “the consecrated works of bard and sage must perish,” illustrating his sentiment by a striking allegory. A splendid tribute to the power and influence of the great works of genius follows ; and the poet then digresses to decry the modern forcing systems of education, and express his gratitude that no formal course of “useful” and “instructive” reading was prescribed to his childhood ; but his mother,

“ Fetching her wisdom rather from times past,  
 Than shaping novelties for times to come,”

left him free to rove in the fields of literature where his childish fancy led, and, with no anxious schemes for his rapid advancement,

“ Was not puffed up by false unnatural hopes,  
 Nor selfish with unnecessary cares,  
 Nor with impatience from the season asked  
 More than its timely produce ; rather loved  
 The hours for what they are, than from regard  
 Glanced on their promises in restless pride.”

The *model-child* finds little mercy at Wordsworth's hands, and his philosophizing trainers are made the object of playful sarcasm. Better to leave the tender mind free to imbibe the

influences of legend and romance, and works which cultivate the imagination and afford a store of pleasing fancies : —

“The child whose love is here, at least, doth reap  
One precious gain, that he *forgets himself*.”

Wordsworth's idea of what childhood should be, may be gathered from the description of his playmates, in the lines in which he breathes the following wish for the village in which his early education was received.

“May she long  
Behold a race of young ones like to those  
With whom I herded ! — (easily, indeed,  
We might have fed upon a fatter soil  
Of arts and letters — but be that forgiven) —  
A race of real children ; not too wise,  
Too learned, or too good ; but wanton, fresh,  
And bandied up and down by love and hate ;  
Not unresentful when self-justified ;  
Fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy ;  
Mad at their sport, like withered leaves in winds ;  
Though doing wrong and suffering, and full oft  
Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight  
Of pain and doubt and fear, yet yielding not  
In happiness to the happiest upon earth.  
Simplicity in habit, truth in speech,  
Be these the daily strengtheners of their minds ;  
May books and Nature be their early joy !  
And knowledge, rightly honored with that name —  
Knowledge not purchased by the loss of power !”

pp. 123, 124.

The task of preparing the *Memoirs* of Wordsworth, intrusted to his nephew by the poet himself, has been discharged in a manner which leaves no room for future biographers. Those who expect to find a book filled with lively anecdote and stirring incident will be disappointed. The work has been blamed as being little more than a running commentary upon the poet's writings ; but, as he himself declared, a poet's life is in his works, and this general truth was never more strikingly illustrated than in his case. The *Memoirs*, however, faithfully relate the various events of his outward history, and enable us to follow down the current of his quiet life.

William Wordsworth, the second son of John Wordsworth, an attorney-at-law of an ancient family, and described as “a

person of considerable mental vigor and eloquence," was born at Cockermouth in Cumberland, on the banks of the Derwent, that "fairest of all rivers," the 7th of April, 1770. His mother died in his childhood, but not before she had predicted that her son, from his strong will and violent temper, would be remarkable either for good or for evil; and his father left him an orphan in his fourteenth year. From his ninth to his fourteenth year, he was at the flourishing school at Hawkshead, near the lake of Esthwaite. Here he engaged with zest in youthful sports, and his intrepid nature prompted many daring feats. He made respectable progress in the classics and mathematics, and acquired considerable knowledge of English literature, particularly of works of imagination; ("for example," he says, "I read all Fielding's works, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, and any part of Swift that I liked; Gulliver's Travels and the Tale of the Tub being both much to my taste.") He read also a great deal of poetry, and had been accustomed from early childhood to commit extracts from the best English poets to memory. At this school, his first verses were written. In October, 1807, Wordsworth was sent by his guardians to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he took his bachelor's degree in January, 1791. The picture he gives in the Prelude of his feelings and pursuits at college shows that his mind was not in harmony with the spirit of the place. Keenly sensible of the deficiencies of the institution, when estimated by his high ideal standard of what a place of generous training ought to be, he had not yet fully learned the wholesomeness of yielding to constituted authority, and following with implicit trust the path of mental discipline prescribed by experience and wisdom, not as the best that can be imagined, but as the best that can be in practice pursued. The extent to which his previous studies had been carried took from many of his college exercises the charm of novelty; and he did not apply himself to the course with that devotedness which the wisdom of his riper years would have sanctioned, and which he afterwards earnestly enjoined upon his young friends who were about to enter upon an academic life. Yet he could not but carry away no small treasure, derived often insensibly from the thousand delicate influences of the peculiar community, "the privileged world within a world," into which he was cast. He describes the



fascination which mathematical truths had for him, even in their partial study, and pays an eloquent tribute of admiration to that noble science. He pursued a desultory reading of classic authors, according to his fancy, and of Italian poetry; his Italian master, (who had been compelled to fly from Milan because an English book was found in his apartment,) had been the teacher of the poet Gray and of Mr. Pitt, and was proud of the rapid progress of his new pupil. Nor was it in vain that the young poet passed a few years in scenes haunted by the memories of illustrious men, — scenes which seemed to bring the great of other days into near and endearing association with himself, and clothe their very persons with

“A lovely and a touching grace  
Of more distinct humanity, that left  
All genuine admiration unimpaired.”

( At the close of the year in which he graduated, he set out for France, through which country he had already travelled in his last college vacation, in a pedestrian tour to the Alps. The year of his residence in France was one of the most important periods of his life. The great drama of the Revolution had opened, and as yet there were no forebodings of the tragic horror of its close. The circumstances of Wordsworth's birth and education, as well as his benevolent heart, predisposed him to sympathize with the struggle. “Born,” as he tells us,

“In a poor district, and which yet  
Retained more of ancient homeliness  
Than any other nook of English ground,”

in his youth he had scarcely seen the face of any one vested with artificial claims to distinction through wealth or blood; and passing thence to an academic community, the “model of a republic” was presented to his view, where

“Distinction open lay to all that came,  
And wealth and titles were in less esteem  
Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry.”

Moreover, the spirit of freedom had been fostered within him by intercourse with nature “and fellowship with venerable books;” so that he regarded the advent of French liberty as “a gift come rather late than soon.” With enthusiastic expectation, he hailed the dawn of a brighter day, when the



wrongs under which men had groaned for ages should be swept from the land, and the hand of the unrighteous oppressor stayed. A close friendship formed at Orleans with the republican general Beaupuis showed him the purity and nobleness of the motives by which many of the patriots were actuated, and attached him more warmly to their cause. The awful scenes at Paris, in the autumn of 1792, gave the first shock to his hopeful enthusiasm, yet by no means drove him to despair. Fortunately, at the close of that year, circumstances compelled him to return to his native country in season to save his principles from utter unsettlement, and probably his life from destruction in the massacre of the Brissotins, with whom he had become connected. The declaration of war by Great Britain against the French republic, in 1793, was a terrible blow to his heart; and when thanksgiving was offered for the victories won by English arms, he gazed with sorrow upon the kneeling worshippers, whose company he would not join. The excesses and outrages which polluted a cause so sacred as he deemed that of the liberty of France, agitated his mind with painful perplexities, and almost drove him to doubt in Divine providence and the very existence of truth and right. It is to the calming influences of nature, and to his sister's gentle beguilements, that he and the world were indebted for his preservation from skepticism and despair. In after years, reflection and experience modified his political views. In a letter to a friend in 1821, referring to the charges sometimes brought against him of having abandoned the liberal sentiments of his youth, he describes the change in his opinions as follows: —

“I should think that I had lived to little purpose if my notions on the subject of government had undergone no modification: my youth must, in that case, have been without enthusiasm, and my manhood endued with small capability of profiting by reflection. . . . I abandoned France and her rulers when *they* abandoned the struggle for liberty, gave themselves up to tyranny, and endeavored to enslave the world. I disapproved of the war against France at its commencement, thinking, which was perhaps an error, that it might have been avoided; but after Bonaparte had violated the independence of Switzerland, my heart turned against him, and against the nation that could submit to be the instrument of such an outrage. Here it was that I parted, in feeling, from the Whigs, and to a certain degree united with their adversaries, who were free from the delusion (such I must ever

regard it) of Mr. Fox and his party, that a safe and honorable peace was practicable with the French nation, and that an ambitious conqueror like Bonaparte could be softened down into a commercial rival." *Memoirs*, vol. ii. pp. 23, 24.

Wordsworth's first publication was the "Descriptive Sketches," composed in 1791 and 1792, and printed in 1793, for the same publisher by whom Cowper's poems were given to the world. It was followed in the same year by the "Evening Walk." The former of these poems attracted the notice of Coleridge, then a student at Cambridge, who at once hailed it as most clearly announcing "the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon."

The period was now rapidly approaching when it was necessary that he should mark out his future course. His friends were eager that he should take holy orders; but the unsettled state of his mind, arising from his interest in the French revolution, made him feel unsuited for that profession. It was at this time that his young friend, Raisley Calvert, bequeathed to Wordsworth, who had nursed him in his sickness, the sum of £900, — a bequest made entirely from a confidence that its recipient had powers which ought to be devoted to the benefit of mankind. This bequest, sufficient to meet all the necessary wants of his frugal life, at once decided him to devote his days to the work of a poet. With a few slight sources of additional income, it supported Wordsworth and his sister nearly eight years, until the sum of £8,500 was received at the death of Lord Lonsdale, from whom it had long been due to the poet's father's estate. For more than fifty years, our author pursued his undeviating way, with a lofty sense of the responsibility under which a poet writes, and an unceasing effort to perform worthily his work. Upon the receipt of Calvert's bounty, he settled in Racedown, Dorsetshire, with his sister, who, from his earliest years to the close of his life, was his constant companion, and whose intellectual and moral graces were his solace and delight.\*

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\* "Coleridge, in 1797, at Stowey, thus describes Miss Wordsworth: 'Wordsworth and his exquisite sister are with me. She is a woman indeed, in mind I mean, and in heart; for her person is such that if you expected to see a pretty woman, you would think her ordinary, if you expected to see an ordinary woman you would think her pretty; but her manners are simple, ardent, impressive. In every motion her innocent soul outbeams so brightly, that who saw her would say "Guilt was a thing impossible with her." Her information various; her eye watchful in minutest observation of nature; and her taste a perfect electrometer.' — *Memoirs*, vol. i. pp. 100 – 102.

Here, and at Alfoxden, whither he removed, in 1797, to be near Coleridge, he labored upon his works, often rejoicing in the visits of his brother bard, who sometimes joined Wordsworth and his sister on their pedestrian excursions, and in the autumn of 1798, accompanied them to Germany, whence they returned the following spring. After their return, they settled at Grasmere; and never afterwards did they abandon the neighborhood of the Lakes. Hither, in a few years, Wordsworth brought a congenial companion to his sister and himself. Mary Hutchinson, to whom he was married in 1803, had sat with him at the same dame's school, and been his playmate in childhood and friend in youth. Of her worth it is enough to say, that the exquisite lines, so familiar to all, "She was a phantom of delight," were written by Wordsworth with reference to his wife, and are an exact portraiture of her character. The indebtedness of the poet to the sympathy and genial influence of two such noble women cannot be adequately told.

At Grasmere, Allan Bank, and, from 1813 until his death, at Rydal Mount, Wordsworth and his family led their quiet and happy life. Five children were born to him, two of whom he soon followed to the grave. His dearly loved brother John, whose native taste and genius added strength to the ties of blood which bound him to the poet, was lost in the wreck of an East-Indiaman of which he had command, in 1805, — the severest affliction Wordsworth was ever called to bear. The common household joys and griefs, the chief incidents of his life, were varied only by occasional excursions to Scotland, Wales, or the Continent.

Worthy friends were not wanting, to complete his social happiness. Coleridge's intimacy with the bard of Rydal was a source of the highest enjoyment, and Southey's \* friendship

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\* "In a letter to his friend Bernard Barton, in 1814, Southey says of Wordsworth: "I have known him nearly twenty years, and for about half that time, intimately. The strength and the character of his mind you see in the Excursion; and his life does not belie his writings; for, in every relation of life, and every point of view, he is a truly exemplary and admirable man. In conversation he is powerful beyond any of his contemporaries; and as a poet, I speak not from the partiality of friendship, nor because we have been so absurdly held up as both writing upon one concerted system of poetry, but with the most deliberate exercise of impartial judgment whereof I am capable, when I declare my full conviction that posterity will rank him with Milton." — *Memoirs, &c., of Bernard Barton*, p. 151. (Am. edition.)



was most highly prized. With Sir George Beaumont, — whom Sir Walter Scott gave the high praise of being “by far the most sensible and pleasing man he ever knew,” — Wordsworth lived on the most cordial terms of intimacy, and was indebted to him for many graceful acts of service. With the great “Wizard of the North” Wordsworth met for the first time in 1803, when making a tour in Scotland with his sister. Scott received them with frank cordiality, and “partly read and partly recited, sometimes in an enthusiastic style of chant, the first four cantos of the Lay of the Last Minstrel.” He conducted his visitors to Melrose Abbey, and pointed out all its hidden beauties. (The Memoirs, with the valuable notes of the American editor, portray a scene of touching interest in a meeting of the two great poets, in the autumn of 1831, when Wordsworth and his daughter visited Scott before his departure for Italy. In the library that evening sat the novelist, and awoke dark forebodings in the breasts of his friends by his remarks upon “the singularity that Fielding and Smollett had both been driven abroad by declining health, and never returned.” By his side sat Wordsworth, suffering so much from an inflammation of the eyes that he was hardly able to lift them up to the light, and wearing a deep green shade over them; and as Mr. Allan, the historical painter, looked at him, with his daughter at his side, he could not fail to think of Milton.)

In 1839, our poet went to Oxford to receive the degree of D. C. L. from the University. The enthusiasm of his reception, the “thunders of applause,” as Dr. Arnold describes them, “repeated over and over again, with which he was greeted in the theatre, by undergraduates and Masters of Arts alike,” were proud assurances of his triumph over the contempt and prejudices with which his name had once been regarded, and bore to his spirit “a nation’s promise of undying fame.”\* Another public honor was worthily bestowed upon Wordsworth in 1843, when, on the death of Southey, the Lord Chamberlain, with the Queen’s approbation, offered him the office of Poet Laureate. The office was at first declined, on the ground that it imposed duties which the poet,

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\* An expression of Mr. Talfourd’s, in his beautiful Sonnet, “on the Reception of the Poet Wordsworth at Oxford,” which is quoted by Professor Reed. — *Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 361.

in his advanced age, could not venture to undertake; but being pressed upon him by the Lord Chamberlain and Sir Robert Peel, it was accepted, under the assurance that the appointment should be considered as imposing no duties, and as merely honorary.\*

The quiet happiness of Wordsworth's old age was clouded by the death of his only daughter, in July, 1847. "The loss of her," he said to an American gentleman, "had taken the sunshine out of his life." She was the wife of Mr. Edward Quillinan, a gentleman of some distinction as a scholar and an author, and whose death has been recently announced. Time had its mellowing influence upon the poet's heart, and grief directed his hopes to a world of enduring blessings. Upon the fruition of these hopes he entered, in 1850, on the 23d of April, — the day of Shakspeare's birth and of Shakspeare's death.

We cannot conclude without a notice of the great service Professor Reed has rendered to the American public, as the Editor of the works of Wordsworth and of his *Memoirs*. His notes on the poet's writings evince an intelligent and genial appreciation of the author, and tend to cultivate the like quality in others; and his additions to the *Memoirs* furnish no inconsiderable portion of the most interesting matter they contain. Mr. Reed has lately published a new, and now complete, edition of the poet's works, in a handsome volume, with convenient indices; a book which no American library should be without. No country contains a larger number of intelligent admirers of Wordsworth's genius than our own. His readers are by no means confined to the dwellers in cities and the important centres of literary cultivation. In the village and hamlet, the retired farm and plantation, where Nature's voices are ever speaking, the poet is welcomed and loved as their best interpreter. How could

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\* "The only poem composed by Wordsworth as Poet Laureate, and published, was the Ode on the Installation of Prince Albert as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge. This ode, like Gray's on a similar occasion, in the same University, was set to music, and so produced, as part of the ceremonies of the occasion alluded to, in July, 1847." — *Note by Prof. Reed. Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 409.

In 1845, the poet took a journey to London, to pay his respects to the Queen upon his appointment. "The reception given to me by the Queen, at her ball," he says, in a letter to Prof. Reed, "was most gracious. Mrs. Everett, the wife of your Minister, among many others, was a witness to it, without knowing who I was. It moved her to the shedding of tears." — *Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 420.



it be otherwise, among men who dwell by the borders of the primeval forest, the boundless prairie or the ocean, the lake or majestic river, or where the mountains are ever smoking around them "like the altars of God"?)

The time has not yet come to pronounce a complete judgment upon the intellectual character and position of the bard of Rydal Mount. Several generations must pass away before the measure and depth of his influence upon literature can be precisely estimated. It is enough to know that, in some of the highest walks of poetry, he will always be recognized as Father and Chief; that his influence will ever be elevating and ennobling; and that to none more appropriately than to himself can the benediction be ascribed, which his own lips uttered:—

" Blessings be with them, and eternal praise,  
Who gave us nobler loves and nobler cares."

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ART. VIII. — *History of the Conspiracy of Pontiac, and the War of the North American Tribes against the English Colonies after the Conquest of Canada.* By FRANCIS PARKMAN, JR. Boston. Little & Brown. 1851. 8vo. pp. 630.

THERE is a melancholy interest in any attempts now made to garner up memorials of the aborigines of this country. Their history, so far as it can be illustrated by direct observation of their peculiar traits of character and modes of life, must soon be written. As a distinct people, preserving their purity of blood and their ancestral characteristics, they are dwindling away as rapidly as the snow melts under an April sun. The very feeble remnants of tribes which continue on this side of the Mississippi, amounting in each case hardly to a score of families, living under the negligent guardianship of the States in which they dwell, still hold the names and manifest some of the physical peculiarities of the great confederacies whence they are descended. But they have been so

altered by contact with civilization and by intermixture of blood, that their habits, their opinions, their traditions, and even their languages, no longer afford any trustworthy indication of the traits of those whom they claim as their progenitors. Those living within the boundaries of New England, for instance, already show a great predominance of mixed blood. According to a report made to the legislature of Massachusetts, in 1849, there are within this State "remnants of twelve tribes or local clans, who are living respectively at Chippequedic, Christiantown, Gay Head, Fall River, Marshpee, Herring Pond, Hassanamisco, Punkapog, Natick, Dudley, Grafton, and Yarmouth. Their whole number is estimated at 847, only about seven or eight of whom are of pure blood, the remainder being a mixture of Indian and African." In Maine, there are about a thousand more, nearly in the same condition, who claim to be descendants of the Souriquois, the Passamaquoddies, and the Penobscots. The Narragansetts, also, have about 400 representatives in Rhode Island, and the Mohegans nearly as many in Connecticut; but it is more than doubtful whether any of these are of pure blood. In the two Carolinas, there are less than 500 who call themselves Catawbas, but who are certainly more than half negro. In New York, however, we find nearly 4,000 of the reputed descendants of the Iroquois,\* who have gained in civilization about as much as they have probably lost in purity of race.

A few Chippewas and Ottawas remain in the new States at the northwest; but to the wide wastes which lie between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains we must look, if anywhere, for remnants of Indian tribes properly so called, uncontaminated in blood, character, and pursuits, — true representatives of those with whom our fathers, from the first colonization of America down to the close of the last war with Great Britain, waged many long and desperate conflicts. A portion of them claim these vast tracts as their ancestral homes, which, for centuries, they shared only with the deer and buffalo; the remainder is composed of those who have been removed thither by the Government of the United

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\* We derive these statistics from a huge quarto volume, recently published under the authority of Congress, by H. R. Schoolcraft, Esq.; it is entitled "Historical and Statistical Information respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States."









